

## **PODCAST EPISODE 4 - Have pet, will travel!**

Hello, fellow pet wellness advocates. Thank you for joining me on today's podcast. It's all about travelling with your pet. Don't you love the sound of the word travel? Covid has kept us cooped up for so long. Now, with spring in the air and a bit of a lessening of restrictions, there's a much better likelihood that you may want to go somewhere, either by plane, train, or automobile, for all you John Candy fans out there. Plus, you might want to take your furry companion on one of those outings. So today we're going to discuss some of my favourite tips for a fun and safe trip with your pet. I want to start off with some general travel tips that apply to all forms of travelling, and then I'll get into some of the specifics on travel tips for each mode of transportation.

The first one I'm going to talk about is identification for your pet. You never know when your dog might run off to chase a squirrel while you're camping and get lost, so always make sure you have a sturdy leash with you and a collar with an ID tag on it. And the ID tag should have your pet's name and ideally, a phone number where they can reach you if your pet is lost. For cats, it's also nice to have a collar with an ID tag. But I appreciate that cats aren't as thrilled about having a collar on them as dogs are. So, the ultimate solution for both cats and dogs is a microchip. And a microchip is a small device that is implanted in between the shoulder blades of your pet and serves as a permanent form of identification. That's impossible to lose. And the best part is that every veterinarian, every animal shelter, and every humane society has a scanner that can scan these microchips. So, if your pet ever got sent to any one of these facilities, they'd be able to find you and get you back reunited with your pet. Another form of identification is just to have a picture of your pet so that if they get lost, you have something to show people. And that could be something you have on your cell phone. Or a lot of my clients used to print out a laminated card with a picture of their pet on it. Either way, just have a picture of your pet available so that if they do get lost you can show people what your pet looks like. And finally, you need to always carry a copy of your dog's health records, especially their vaccine status. You never know when you're going to have to cross a border, and a lot of times they won't let you cross unless you have identification that they've been vaccinated for certain diseases like rabies, for instance.

My second tip for travelling considers the health of your pet. You want to make sure that they've had a recent veterinary exam and that they're healthy enough to

travel, especially if they're going on an airplane. You also want to make sure they're up to date on all their vaccinations, particularly things like distemper, parvovirus and rabies, which are typical vaccines that most veterinarians give.

However, you want to make sure you check where you're going because some provinces and states have very different parasites, viruses and bacteria that may potentially infect your pet. For example, let's say you're travelling in North America, and you live in Southern Ontario, which, by the way, is one of the more common locations for the bacteria that transmits Lyme disease as well as the parasite that causes heartworm disease. You may experience less of a risk with your pet if you travel let's say to the Northern Prairie provinces like Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. However, your pet may be at a way higher risk if you're travelling to the deep south. Places like Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, or Florida, for instance.

Regardless of where you travel in North America, your pet should always be on a good flea, tick, and heartworm combo preventative, especially if you're travelling from a low-risk area to a high-risk area.

Next, let's talk about provisions. When you pack your bags, you're going to need to pack your pet's bag as well. Make sure that you bring extras of everything for your pet, including their food, any medication, extra collars, and leashes, lots of bedding and water bowls. You should always have a water source available to your pet, so I like to bring a thermos full of water, for instance.

One thing I find that a lot of people don't think about is veterinary care. When you get there, you never know what's going to happen. So, I always suggest when you get to your location, find a veterinary clinic close by. Plus, you want to find a veterinary emergency clinic, because if, God forbid, something happens, you don't want to have to start looking for one. Then you want to have their number right away so you can treat your pet immediately. Speaking of treatment, I think it's always good to have a pet first aid kit, and I'm going to add a link to the show notes that takes you to the American SPCA, where they have a great checklist that you can download to make your own homemade first aid kit. And if that's too much of a hassle, you can always go online and buy a pet first aid kit. Either way, I think it's important to have a first aid kit for your pet. Finally, no matter where you're going, whether it's a hotel or campsite, I always think you should have some form of

shelter for your pet, like, for instance, a collapsible soft crate. You want someplace where your pet can stay safe and comfortable at night.

Okay, now let's talk about tips for travelling with your pet on different modes of transportation. And let's start off with airline travel. There are a few preparation tips before you arrive. Number one, you want to make sure you have proof of vaccination and an international health certificate, which you usually must get seven to ten days before you travel. And please remember this, because I can't tell you how many of my clients called me from the airport on their way to Europe only to find out that they couldn't take their pet with them because they didn't have an international health certificate. Another thing you need to remember is when you're making your reservation, you need to make your pet's reservation as well as they only allow a certain number of pets on each flight. An important piece of equipment when you're travelling on an airline with your pet is a crate, which must be a specific crate that's airline approved. And that means it needs to be large enough for your pet to stand, turn and lie down. It's got to be strong with handles and grips. You can't have anything protruding inward that might harm your pet. It's got to have a leakproof bottom, ideally a tray. There needs to be good ventilation, and you always must have a "Live Animal Sticker" as well as a sticker with the owner's information and phone number on it. And inside that crate, you want to have adequate bedding, your pet's favourite toy, and a water bottle so they can have water all the time. You want to accustom your pet to the carrier before you travel, and we'll go over that a little later when we talk about car travel. And if you're lucky enough to be able to take your pet on the plane with you rather than putting them down in the cargo area, then you want to make sure you have them in a crate as well and that they're acclimatized to that crate. You certainly don't want your little dog barking the entire trip. That is not a way to make friends on an airplane. Another tip before you arrive is to make sure there's no restrictions. For instance, certain airlines won't allow puppies less than eight weeks of age that have not been properly weaned and some won't allow brachycephalic breeds of dogs; those dogs with sort of the squished in faces like boxers, bulldogs, and pugs. So just make sure your pet is allowed to fly. Probably my biggest tip in terms of preparation is to make sure you research the policies of the airline regarding what happens if your pet must stay in cargo because there's no current standard for pet travel on airplanes. My suggestion, do your homework.

This next suggestion may be a no-brainer, but please book a direct flight if there's a stopover. Yeah, you get to go into the terminal and have a coffee, but your pet ends up staying in the belly of the plane, which in my opinion isn't fair to them. And finally, make sure you fast your dog for at least 3 to 4 hours before the flight to reduce air sickness. Water is still crucial and should never be withheld. You may also want to exercise your pet before heading to the airport, especially if they are a high-strung breed or a nervous traveller. This will certainly help them to relax when they finally get there.

Ok, let's switch gears and talk about what we do once we arrive at the airport. Make sure you arrive early because your pet must be checked in at the airline counter as well. The biggest question I get from pet owners is whether they should tranquilize their dog for the flight. And that's a tough one for me because I really don't want pets to be anxious, but at the same time, I want them to be safe. And I'll be honest with you, I'm not a huge believer in tranquilization because I've heard of inflight emergencies that have occurred with heavily sedated dogs. But I want to clarify that there's obviously pros and cons to giving a tranquillizer or not giving one. And the pro is if you have a dog that is that anxious, whether they're going to literally injure themselves trying to get out of the cage, then a tranquillizer is probably a must for that pet. And so, you just need to sit down with your veterinarian and discuss what tranquillizer and what safe dose to use. Instead, I prefer to start pets on a natural antianxiety product at least 15 to 30 days before departing. By the time they are on the plane, the product has had a chance to build up in their system and produce its antianxiety effects.

Pheromones are another safe and excellent way to reduce anxiety associated with flying. But again, if your dog is a bad traveller, you may need to ask your veterinarian for a sedative. I will just say that the new tranquillizers are a lot safer than the old ones used to be.

And those are the tips for airline travel, which, by the way, are very similar to what you would do with your pet if you were taking a train, a bus, or a boat. Just realize that on those three modes of transportation, there's likely going to be more restrictions than you're going to find when you're travelling on an airplane.

Let's move on to a very common way of travelling with your pet, and that's in the car. And again, let's start off with the preparation before you leave. You want to

make sure you have the necessary documents, including all your pet's vaccine certificates, especially if you're going to be crossing the border. A lot of us don't think about this, but your pet should be used to travelling in a car before you go on any long trips with them. And if they're not, you may want to take the time to slowly accustom them to travelling in the car, and we'll talk about that in a moment. And finally, make sure there's a good bathroom break before you leave.

Now let's move on to what we do with the car ride itself. If your pet is going to travel in a crate in the car, I only recommend doing that if your pet is used to a crate and enjoys being in there. If they do enjoy being in the crate, here's a few extra tips for you. Number one is, never put a seat belt around a crate in the backseat unless the manufacturer has crash tested the carrier, because that carrier may get crushed by the seatbelt in an accident and your pet may get crushed along with it. And number two, the best place for a crate is on the floor behind the front seats. However, if you do that, you want to make sure that there's adequate ventilation.

This next tip brings back memories of my brother and I when we were kids, jumping back and forth between the middle seat and the back seat and our parent's old station wagon. Please never let your dog roam free in the back seat. They will fly through the front windshield as easy as any person without a seatbelt. If it's hot out and you want to open the windows for ventilation, that's fine. Just don't let your dog stick their head out of the window. I had a colleague who treated a dog with a severe head injury after a stone from a truck hit the dog straight in the head. And I've personally seen many dogs come in with eye infections after they've been on car rides and sticking their head out of the window. In my experience, it's best to keep your pet reigned in during car travel, and the best way to do that is with a travel harness. However, dog harnesses are not created equal.

Make sure you choose the correct travel harness for your pet that is not too loose but comfortable and that is certified to be crash-tested. Plus, I discourage you from using long extension tethers that allow too much movement, or any zipline-like products that can become choking hazards for your pet or another family member if your pet decides to move around too much in the car. And then there's the topic of driver distraction. I know they're cute, but you should never ride with your pet in the front seat as they are more distracting than your cell phone. Treat them like you would an infant, teach them to be comfortable with being secured for a car ride. My suggestion is you just start off with a very short car ride and increase the

time on every trip until you're convinced that they are cool with being harnessed while travelling before you go on that big journey.

And finally, I want to spend a little bit of time on the topic of pets vomiting in the car, which is one of the most common questions I get about travelling with a pet. There are three reasons why a dog would vomit in the car. If they are young and under a year of age, they most likely will be experiencing motion sickness as the part of the inner ear that's involved in balance is not fully developed yet. Most puppies, however, outgrow motion sickness by the time they reach a year of age. Some dogs may have an ear infection, which gets down into their middle ear and causes them to feel unbalanced and nauseated. Also, a dog suffering from vestibular disease, a disease that affects the vestibular nerve involved in balance, may also become nauseous on a car ride. The third and main reason for vomiting in dogs is usually related to the stress and anxiety associated with travel, and that may have stemmed from when they were puppies and got sick in the car all the time. The most common cause of anxiety associated with travel is related to some overwhelming stimuli that can be associated with a moving vehicle. This anxiety can be heightened if they travel infrequently like once or twice a year to, let's say, see the vet, which can also be stressful at times. So how do we know if our pets are anxious about a car ride? Well, honestly, their activity level can be deceiving because some dogs that are anxious will pace and be very active, whereas others will become inactive and lethargic. More common signs of anxiety often get misinterpreted by pet owners as something completely unrelated to anxiety.

So, let's go over those. Number one, yawning. That's a classic sign of anxiety in a dog. Yet people see their dog yawn and always comment on how they think they're tired. Number two, panting. Another common sign. Yet people see their dog panting and think they're too hot. Number three, lip licking. It's amazing how often dogs will do this when they're anxious, but people tend to see this as a time where they're either thirsty or hungry. Number four, whining or barking. Even after almost 30 years of being a veterinarian, I still don't speak dog, and so no one really knows why they whine, or they bark. But we don't often associate it with anxiety when, in fact, that's a common cause. Do you know what's interesting? The next time you take your dog to your veterinarian, watch them in the room, look for the yawning, the panting, the whining, or the lip licking. I'll bet you'll see at least one of those things happening except now you'll understand why they aren't thirsty, tired or too hot. And by the way, you have every right to say, 'Can you please slow things down?'

I think he's nervous.' Okay, so what can we do now about the anxiety and the vomiting? Well, if the vomiting is not due to anxiety, but instead the other two reasons I mentioned earlier, like the puppy or the dog with the inner ear problem or vestibular problem, then there are potent anti-vomiting drugs that your veterinarian can get you that will solve this problem.

For those pets that are anxious, the gold standard treatment is a behaviour technique which involves systematic desensitization, which I talked about in another podcast about nail trims and another technique at the same time known as counter-conditioning. And you will understand what both two terms mean in a second. The desensitization part is when you introduce a pet to the least anxiety-provoking stimulus and reward good behaviour, and then continue slowly and introduce more anxiety-provoking stimuli and reward calm behaviour. So, if we're talking about a pet that is anxious about going into the car, it may start as simple as rewarding the dog for standing beside the car and being calm. Then it may just be sitting in the car with the dog and rewarding calm behaviour and then building up to starting the car and rewarding relaxation. Once they are comfortable sitting in the running car, it's time to take them on very short trips, like down the driveway and gradually increase the time in the car. Every time they show anxiety, you must stop immediately and move to a less anxious part of the process and just go slower. And that is exactly what we mean by systematic desensitization. The counter-conditioning part means that we are changing a pet's emotional response or feeling towards a fearful stimulus like a car ride. The only negative to desensitizing and counter-conditioning a dog to a fearful stimulus is that it takes a fair bit of time and patience, but at the end, both of you will benefit tremendously. It's essentially a cure for your dog's problem, which in my mind is better than any drug that we can throw at an anxiety problem. For those of you that don't have the patience or the time to desensitize and counter-condition, there are other options, though I will admit that you're not going to get the results that you really want with any other option. So here are the other anti-anxiety tips that will help you but never take the place of desensitization and counter-conditioning.

Although I've already mentioned it, I'll mention it again. Dogs are less likely to vomit on an empty stomach when they're anxious, so withholding food is a good idea. But as you will always hear me say, never withhold water. Just don't let them gulp a ton right before hopping in the car. For dogs who like their crate, you can use it to make them less anxious because it's a safe place, so bring it along. And keeping them

busy with their favourite toy is always a good distractor. Remember to keep the car cool, especially in the summer. And it has been shown in studies that dogs really enjoy soft classical music, so this is no time to be blaring “Jump”, by Van Halen or Drake, if you have no idea who Van Halen is!

We’ll now talk about something you can give your dog to help their anxiety. I’m big into natural anti-anxiety products over sedatives. I’ve mentioned ingredients like L-theanine, tryptophan and milk protein hydroxylate, in other podcasts and I like them even better in combination. I’m also big into the use of pheromones, another very safe natural product. There’s a pheromone collar for dogs called Adaptil. There’s also a spray form of Adaptil that you can spray in the backseat or blanket which will help keep them relaxed. For those of you travelling with your kitties, you can spray Feliway, the cat pheromone, into the kennel five or ten minutes before they go in and that can be so amazing at calming them down. For those dogs and cats that are very anxious and don’t respond to anything I just mentioned, my suggestion is to talk to your veterinarian about an appropriate prescription sedative. However, in those dogs and cats, it may be worth your while to at least do a little desensitizing and counter-conditioning to reduce their anxiety on the next trip. You want a vacation with your pet to be great for both of you.

I hope the tips I’ve outlined today will help you enjoy that journey. Remember, our pets deserve our best!

If you’re excited to hear more about how you can become a pet wellness advocate be sure to subscribe so you’re notified when a new episode is posted. Thanks for spending time with us today.